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ABSTRACT

The Association of Research Libraries is fully committed to the principle of unrestricted access to and dissemination of ideas, i.e., member libraries must have unlimited access to the machine-readable bibliographic records which are created by member libraries and maintained in bibliographic utilities. Coordinated collection development programs and shared resources programs are based on unlimited bibliographic access to information. ARL's Committees on Collection Development, Preservation of Research Library Materials, and Bibliographic Control, have developed eight goals to realize the unlimited use and exchange of bibliographic records: (1) all bibliographic records for research level materials must be conveniently available to a researcher or bibliographer, regardless of the bibliography utility used by the home institution; (2) accurate identification of an item designated for, receiving, or having received preservation microfilming must be available to the research library community, and records of such items must be made available to each major bibliographic utility; (3) libraries may also note other significant conservation treatment of specific materials; (4) restrictions on the use or exchange of all bibliographic records must be reduced or eliminated; (5) a true North American database of machine-readable bibliographic records must be established with electronic links that meet international and U.S. standards for open systems connection; (6) all new and retrospectively converted records must be contributed to this database; (7) new records must be created and existing manual records converted in accordance with established standards; and (8) holdings symbols must be added to existing records in the database. ARL will continue to identify barriers to unlimited use and exchange of bibliographic data, and calls upon others to work with them to overcome existing barriers. (BBM)

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ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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ARL Statement on Unlimited Use and Exchange of Bibliographic Records

The Association of Research Libraries is fully committed to the principle of unrestricted access to and dissemination of ideas. In order to achieve this goal, member libraries must have unlimited access to the machine-readable bibliographic records which are created by member libraries and maintained in bibliographic utilities. This body of machine-readable bibliographic records is not only an international resource of inestimable value in its own right, but it is also essential to scholars and researchers who wish to use the research resources of North America which are developed and preserved by member libraries.

Unrestricted access to bibliographic records which are widely accessible on a timely basis and adhere to recognized standards underlies the efforts of research libraries to organize library materials for use and has significant economic benefits for research libraries and their users. Timely, efficient and economically sound programs to preserve materials depend on access to bibliographic data and accompanying documentation. Coordinated collection development programs and shared resources programs are also based on unlimited bibliographic access which enables information to be made available for scholars who use research libraries.

Recognizing that barriers to the unfettered exchange of bibliographic resources exist and that technological developments in local systems as well as the availability of CD-ROM based local cataloging systems are challenging the ways in which libraries share bibliographic records, ARL's Committees on Collection Development, Preservation of Research Library Materials, and Bibliographic Control, have developed the following goals to realize the unlimited use and exchange of bibliographic records.

Collection Development. ARL has a longstanding interest in resource sharing and cooperative actions in the area of collection development. This has been expressed most recently in the North American Collections Inventory Project, and in the application of the Conspectus (developed within RLG) in a number of ARL libraries. The ability to identify and locate materials is a keystone for any truly effective cooperative program in this area. However, the existence of several distinct and separate bibliographic utilities has complicated this task for both individual researchers and libraries. Although the NCIP Conspectus can be an invaluable tool for inter-institutional cooperation, it cannot substitute for readily accessible information on specific holdings. The maximum potential for resource sharing and cooperative collection development cannot be realized unless all bibliographic records for research level materials are conveniently available to a researcher or bibliographer, regardless of the bibliographic utility used by the home institution.

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Preservation. Unlimited access to bibliographic records is vital for effective preservation of research library materials.

1. Accurate identification of an item designated for, receiving, or having received preservation microfilming should be available freely to the entire research library community in order to avoid wasteful duplicative effort. Bibliographic records of preserved items (e.g., master microfilms) must be made available to each major bibliographic utility in order that individual libraries may use the records online or hold them in local databases. In the case of monographs, for example, the record should be title- and edition- specific.

2. In addition to noting preservation microfilming intention and treatment, libraries may, if feasible, note other significant conservation treatment, including washing, deacidification, and conservation rebinding.

Bibliographic Control. The bibliographic data formulated by ARL member libraries is, collectively, an invaluable resource. The actual and potential value derives from high quality, broad scope and comprehensiveness, and wide availability. To maximize availability of research resources held by North American research libraries, the Association and its member libraries endorse, and agree to work toward, these objectives:

1. Reduction or elimination of restrictions on use or exchange of all bibliographic records.

2. Establishment of a true North American database of machine-readable bibliographic records via electronic links that meet international and U.S. standards for open systems interconnection.

3. Contribution of all new and retrospectively converted records to this database.

4. Creation of new records and conversion of existing manual records in accordance with established standards of form, content, and content designation.

5. Addition of holdings symbols to existing records in the database.

To these ends, the Association of Research Libraries believes that systems of scholarly communication will be made more effective when bibliographic records are available to librarians and scholars regardless of the system in which they reside. The Association recognizes that it is not possible to create a wholly unfettered, flawless, timely, and complete body of bibliographic records. Nevertheless, the Association of Research Libraries, through its Committees and Task Forces, will continue to identify barriers to the unlimited use and exchange of bibliographic data—we call upon others to work with us toward overcoming those barriers which exist.

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